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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 004577

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE GOE-MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD STAND OFF

REF: A. CAIRO 3941

[1](#)B. CAIRO 3755

[1](#)C. CAIRO 3424

Classified by ECPO Counselor John Desrocher for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Government sources quoted in media reports claim that approximately 300 members of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), detained during a large GOE arrest campaign in May (reftels), were released in the week of June 13. The GOE maintains that 349 of the MB members arrested in May remain in custody.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The MB, according to information posted on its own website, acknowledges releases but maintains that about 590 of what it claims were 2400 MB members detained in May remain in custody. The GOE has not released two senior members of the MB - Essam Erian, arrested on May 8, and Mahmoud Ezzat, arrested on May 22 (reftels). Their arrests broke a precedent that had held for at least ten years - that the GOE would not target the MB's senior echelon for arrest. Their arrests were cited by observers as evidence that relations between the GOE and the MB, tense but generally on slow-boil in recent years, was heating up into a full confrontation.

[1](#)3. (C) The release of the hundreds picked up in May is the first sign that the confrontation could be cooling. Opposition leader Ayman Nour told poloff during a June 16 meeting that GOE security officials and the MB had recently concluded a "truce" whereby the MB would agree to refrain from staging the unauthorized demonstrations that sparked the latest round of confrontation this spring, in exchange for the release of most of those arrested in May.

[1](#)4. (C) On the other hand, elements of the MB leadership have continued to make provocative statements in the media. For example, Afaq Arabiya, the MB's weekly paper, printed a column on June 9 asserting the group's right to form a political party. The same issue quoted MB Deputy Supreme Guide Mohammed Habib as calling for a "national alliance against the regime." Such sentiments would certainly seem to be crossing the "red lines" defining what is permissible and what is not, at least under the "old rules," which, as noted ref C, have been markedly receding in the spring of 2005.

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GRAY